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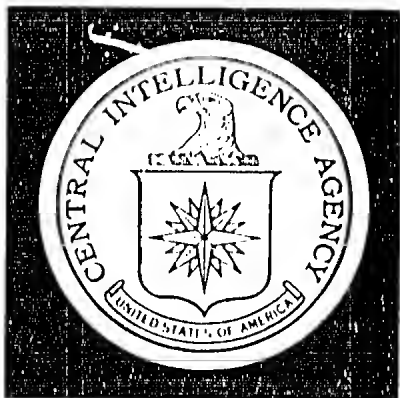
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Political Change in Guatemala: Order vs. Violence

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POLITICAL CHANGE IN GUATEMALA: ORDER vs. VIOLENCE

The inauguration of Carlos Arana as president of Guatemala on 1 July will mark both a high point in the country's feeble democratic record and a test of the forces of orderly process.

Arana will be Guatemala's first freely elected president to receive the office from the political opposition. Outgoing president Mendez Montenegro will be the first president to have completed his term since 1951 and only the third in the country's history to have done so. All legitimate forces have displayed a commitment to set new constitutional political patterns and to break the country's traditional antidemocratic habits.

Arana's victory, however, represented a demand for greater governmental effectiveness against Communist terrorism; Arana came to national prominence by decimating terrorists in the northeast a few years ago. Communists have long anticipated that popular aversion to the expected excesses of a right-wing government would provide them their greatest opportunity. The re-emergence of a rightist terrorist force in the past month provides a grim backdrop to the coming political change and has already dimmed hopes for peaceful progress.

A Background of Terrorism

The electorate, wearied by years of Communist terrorism and disillusioned by the bland government of the Revolutionary Party, turned to the anti-Communist champion, Colonel Arana, whose promise of peace and order won him a plurality in the elections on 1 March. Arana's reputation as an effective lawman rests on his eradication of guerrillas in the northeast between 1966 and 1968. In that operation he turned armed rightist civilians against the guerrillas and their suspected supporters, effectively ending the strong Communist influence in the area. During the same period, special units of the army and police also launched an all-out attack on the subversives, employing clandestine groups as assassination squads. The program of counterterrorism was highly effective in disrupting the Communists' networks and bases and in inhibiting support from their sympathizers. The attendant wave



President-elect Arana

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of violence, however, also victimized many innocents and evoked an international and domestic outcry. Stung by widespread publicity and criticism, President Mendez halted the campaign in March 1968 and sent Colonel Arana to Nicaragua as ambassador.

Communist activity during the following months was mostly organizational, although sporadic hit-and-run terrorism created a continuing security problem. Beginning last December, the Communists stepped up their efforts at sabotage and assassination in an abortive attempt to disrupt the elections. During the campaign period the terrorists, with virtual impunity, attacked and killed more than a dozen security officials, a candidate for mayor of Guatemala City, and a highly regarded editor of the country's largest newspaper. They caused damage estimated in the millions of dollars in a series of fire-bombings in the capital. On the eve of the elections in March, they secured the release of a guerrilla by kidnaping the foreign minister, and a week later obtained the release of two others in exchange for the US labor attaché. In these circumstances, the electorate gave the incumbent Revolutionary Party a no-confidence vote; it ran second to the rightist coalition backing Arana.

Post-Election Violence

The popular euphoria that resulted from following democratic processes and experiencing an unprecedented opposition victory in an honest election was short-lived. The nation was embarrassed and the world was shocked by the Communists' brutal murder of the kidnaped West German ambassador on 5 April after the government refused to ransom him. Even the Guatemalan public, which might have been inured to brutality after a decade of terrorism, was stunned by the event.

Mendez imposed a state of siege. Beyond press censorship designed mainly to squelch criticism of the government, however, only token security measures were taken. Clearly Mendez had

decided that it was not in his interest to tackle the security problem. The security forces have all but suspended their normal activities, construing the administration's release of prisoners and other measures that undercut their efforts as Mendez' withdrawal from the battle against insurgency. Mendez' overriding desire has been and remains survival in office through his entire term, and he is a practiced advocate of sitting tight to ride out the storm. His motive for suspending animation may also be political, as Arana and his followers believe, because any successful anti-Communist activity would ease the insurgency problem for the new government.

The unwillingness of the Mendez government to move against the extreme left goaded the right again into wreaking its own vengeance. In late April, the extreme right's response to the violence of the left and the apathy of the government was revealed by the discovery of the first mutilated victim of a new counterterror organization. The new group, calling itself "Ojo por Ojo" (Eye for an Eye), appears to be made up of some former members of the army's clandestine assassination squads as well as extremist civilians in Arana's camp. Ojo por Ojo has been responsible for as many as a dozen recent murders, whose victims had been tortured before death.

The rightist revenge for Communist terrorism, directed partly against the leftist intellectual community, has evoked outraged denunciation from university and other liberal circles. Following the assassination of an economics professor early this month, the university's governing council issued a declaration attacking government security forces for their passivity in the face of continuing violence. It called on the army to fulfill its constitutional role and to put an end to the terrorist acts. Other organizations associated with the left have issued similar statements condemning threats by Ojo por Ojo received recently by a number of their members.

The obvious concern in these liberal circles is that the current wave of rightist terrorism is a

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prelude to the policies of Arana's government. Arana apparently condones the Ojo organization's actions as a necessary expedient now but claims he will implement a strictly legal assault on the terrorist problem after his inauguration. Although he probably can rein in most of his extremist associates, his willingness to do so probably will depend on the level of Communist activity during the first days of his administration.

Arana vs. the Insurgents

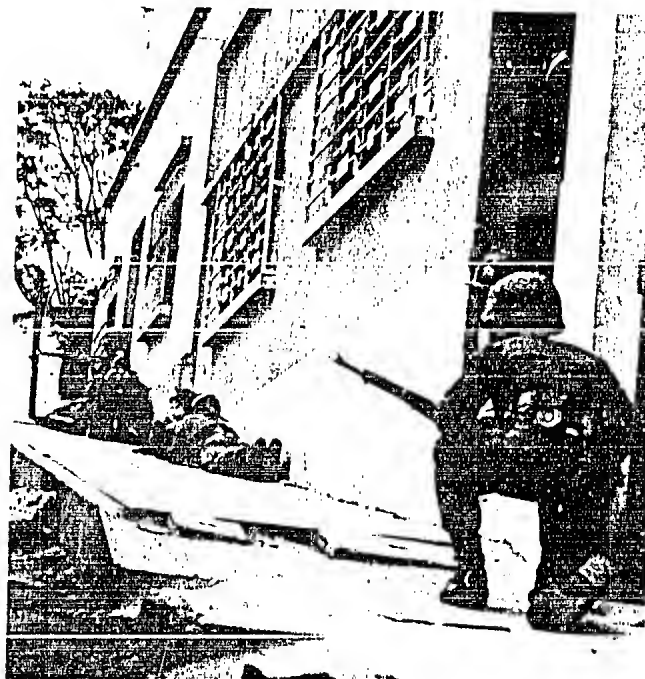
Arana takes seriously his mandate to eliminate the insurgency problem, and his enemies as well as his supporters expect a full-scale anti-Communist campaign after he takes office. His more rabid backers and his opponents assume that Arana will pursue the same program against the Communists that he used earlier, that is, more widespread employment of Ojo-style tactics.

Arana repeatedly has forsworn illegal methods and has assured the public that he has a plan of action within the law, although he declines to reveal it. In his contacts with US officials, the president-elect has discussed the need for better training for the security forces, better police laboratories and technical equipment, more personnel, better maintenance of arms, and improved communications and coordination of intelligence. He is contemplating the establishment of an "elite police corps," a small, trained outfit whose work would focus exclusively in the terrorist field. His advisers have spoken of using military tribunals to try accused subversives in order to bypass legally the established judicial system, which is weak and corrupt.

Arana feels under great pressure to produce immediate results, but transforming the present security forces and judicial system into competent, efficient organizations is at best a long-range process. His major assets on 1 July when he begins his presidency are the good will of the armed forces and their desire to cooperate with him. Their past performance, however, has demonstrated their limited abilities. Moreover,

continual personnel shifts and enforced inaction during the preinaugural period have thrown the security organizations, particularly the police, into administrative chaos.

It seems unlikely, Arana's statements notwithstanding, that he or his advisers have as yet constructed a legal plan for quick results. Arana's directness and his evident earnestness may lead him to make an immediate appeal for public support for, and patience with, his administration. Since entering politics last year, Arana has observed and commented on Guatemala's serious deficiencies in the social sphere. He promises to fight ignorance, poverty, and disease, so as to remove the causes of violent political dissidence. He probably hopes to play on these themes to gain acceptance and cooperation among those sectors of the public that are apprehensive and fearful that his may be a tyrannical regime.



Counter guerrilla Activity in Guatemala City

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Fear on the Left

The moderation and social concern displayed by Arana as candidate and as president-elect have not erased his image as "the butcher of Zacapa" held by many, and the Ojo's activities have added to the fear among the leftist opposition. Even the vice president elect, one of Arana's closest advisers, has expressed concern over the rightist terrorism and the characterization in the international press of the new leadership as "assassins."

The presentiment that the Arana administration is a threat prevails in the intellectual community, the opposition political parties, the press, and labor organizations, as well as among Arana's obvious targets, the guerrillas and terrorists. Their foreboding will lead them to interpret Arana's actions and policies in the worst light, and if he proves thin-skinned, the gap between the opposition and the government will grow.

The Communists

Communist terrorism since the murder of the West German ambassador in April has continued at a relatively low level. The Ojo murders have claimed no victims among the hard-core terrorists and therefore have probably only a marginal relationship to the Communist pull-back. The Communists may have an arranged or implicit "deal" with the Mendez government to hold off terrorism in exchange for the virtual retirement of the security forces for the rest of his term.

It is clear that the insurgents hope to prove that the vaunted anti-Communist Arana can control them no better than past presidents. It seems likely that they will attempt to challenge him in the first days of his presidency and that they will attempt a terrorist act aimed at gaining wide publicity, such as the kidnaping or assassination of a prominent Guatemalan or a foreign diplomat. Unless the Arana administration can achieve an unprecedented breakthrough against the clan-

destine terrorist organizations, this kind of hit-and-run action will be almost impossible to stop. The Communists are believed to have the assets for a fairly prolonged period of terrorist activity in Guatemala City.

The bulk of leftist terrorism is perpetrated by the fanatical Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), which is made up mainly of young, rabid leftists who consider violence the only method of undoing Guatemala's feudalistic socioeconomic structure. They are said to believe that their persistent provocation of the security forces will lead to a bitterly harsh repressive period, which in turn will so alienate the general public that active popular support for the revolutionaries will result. The appearance of Ojo and the public outrage and revulsion that its activities have provoked are probably seen by the FAR as encouraging developments.

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Less devoted to violence but hardly averse to it, the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT) has been under pressure for some weeks to avenge the recent deaths of two party members. The PGT, reportedly with some cooperation from the FAR, has been concentrating on US targets, [redacted]

[redacted] plans to assassinate US Embassy officials have failed only because of increased security measures in effect at the Mission. The Communists identify US representatives with the Guatemalan security forces and with the "repressive" government policies because of US military training of and aid to the security forces.

Arana's Dilemma

If the Communists launch a terrorist campaign early in July, Arana is likely to find the legal weapons at his disposal as ineffective as they have been in the past. In office, as now, he may find it difficult to resist reverting to methods he has seen work well in the past. In any event, the strength of his resolve to resist it should become apparent soon after he takes office.

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The brutal cycle of score-settling between the left and right now in progress presents a grim outlook for Guatemala and for the US Mission there. Continuing Communist surveillance of US officials makes plain the terrorists' determination to put pressure on the government partly by attacking the Americans. Arana and his ministers

will be under the constant threat of assassination. The democratic process begun by the constitutional transfer of power will come under heavy strains, and the prospect is for difficult days ahead for the new government and for the steadily polarizing society.

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Special Report

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